

Jahar Singh

Vs

Union of India and Others

Civil Appeal No. 11929 of 1996

(M. K. Mukherjee, S. P. Kurdukar JJ)

13.09.1996

JUDGMENT

M.K. MUKHERJEE, J. –

1. Special leave granted. Heard the learned counsel for the parties.

2. At all material times the appellant was - and still is - an employee of the Savings Bank Control Organisation (SBCO), Uttar Pradesh Circle, under the Ministry of Communications, Department of Posts, New Delhi. In May 1992 while working in the Agra Head Post Office he appeared in the examination held for appointment of Accountants in the Post Office (PO) and Railway Mail Services (RMS); and the Senior Superintendent of Post Offices, Agra Division, Agra vide his letter Nos. 82/Exam/PO and RMS/Accountant/92 dated 30-11-1992 informed him that he had qualified for that post. The appellant, however, did not get any appointment to the post of Accountant in spite of his such qualification and, on the contrary, on 26-8-1993, he received a copy of a letter dated 23-7-1993 sent by Shri A.K. Kaushal, an Assistant Director General in the office of the Director General (Posts), New Delhi, to Shri Jagadamba Singh, ADOS (Rectt). attached to the office of the Chief Postmaster General, U.P. Circle, intimating him that as he (the appellant) was working in SBCO as an LDC (Lower Division Clerk) he was not eligible to appear for the PO and RMS Accountant examination and his candidature may be cancelled immediately. Since this letter has an important bearing on this appeal we quote the same in extenso :

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"A.K. KAUSHALASSTT. DIR. GENL. (SPN)141-230/92-SPB-II 23-7-1993

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Dear Shri Singh,

Please refer to your d.o. letter No. Rectt./M-67/May-92/3 dated 4-5-1993 regarding posting of Shri Jahar Singh, SBCO Agra HPO as Accountant.

2. The matter has been examined. Since Shri Jahar Singh was working in SBCO as an LDC he was not eligible to appear for the PO and RMS Accountant Examination as per rules. The candidature of Shri Jahar Singh may be cancelled immediately and he cannot, therefore, be considered for appointment as an Accountant.

With best wishes,

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Yours sincerely, (A.K. KAUSHAL)

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Shri Jagdamba Singh, ADOS (Rectt.) O/o the Chief Postmaster General, U.P. Circle, LUCKNOW

Copy to :

1. The PMG Agra Region, Agra.

2. Shri Jahar Singh, PA (SBCO) Agra HPO with reference to his letter dated 28-3-1993 addressed to Member (D), Department of Posts, Dak Bhavan, New Delhi.

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(A.K. KAUSHAL) Asstt. Director General (SPN)"

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3. Against such cancellation of his candidature the appellant made a representation to the Director General of Posts, New Delhi which was rejected. He then filed than an original application in the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT), Allahabad Bench wherein he asserted that though his initial appointment in 1983 was an an LDC in SBCO, since 1-8-1991 he was working there as a Postal Assistant (PA) and the permission that was granted to him to appear in the examination for appointment as an Accountant was unqualified - and not provisional. He, therefore, submitted that the respondents were not justified in rejecting his claim for appointment to that post after his success in the examination.

4. In contesting the application the respondents reiterated that the appellant was working as an LDC at the time he appeared for the examination. The other contention that was raised on their behalf was that even the PAs of SBCO acquired an identity of its own after it (SBCO) was reorganised with effect from 1-8-1991 with a different and distinct channel of promotion which did not entitle them to become Accountants in PO and RMS under the extant Rules.

5. In disposing of the application the Tribunal observed that though from the admitted facts of the case it was apparent that the appellant was allowed to appear in the examination for appointment as an Accountant by mistake as he belonged to a separate cadre, the respondents were not justified in cancelling his candidature as he was a bona fide candidate and there was no lapse on his part. It further observed that no rules or circulars were brought to its notice which empowered the respondents to cancel his candidature. Accordingly, the Tribunal set aside the order dated 23-7-1993 cancelling the candidature of the appellant as an Accountant and all orders made pursuant thereto. In spite thereof, the Tribunal did not grant the relief sought for by the appellant on the ground that he had become ineligible for promotion to the post of Accountant by virtue of separation of cadres of Assistants of SBCO from those PO and RMS. Dissatisfied with the above order the appellant filed a review application contending that after having quashed the order of cancellation of his candidature the Tribunal was not justified in refusing him the consequential relief of being appointed as an

Accountant in PO and RMS. The Tribunal, however, rejected the application observing that even a defective reasoning of an order could not be made the basis for setting aside the same in review. Hence this appeal at the instance of the appellant

6. Besides, reiterating the contentions raised before the Tribunal Mr Murlidharan, the learned counsel appearing for the appellant submitted, relying upon the averments made by the appellant in the supplementary affidavit he filed in this Court, that the contention of the respondents that PAs of SBCO were not eligible for appointment to the post of Accountants in PO and RMS was patently untrue for in the following year (1993) also PAs of SBCO were permitted to appear in the examination held for the above post. In opposing the above contentions Mr Choudhary, the learned Senior Counsel appearing for the respondents, assailed the finding of the Tribunal that the cancellation of the appellant's candidature was improper but supported the other finding of the Tribunal that the appellant was not entitled to the post of Accountant in the PO and RMS, as SBCO has a distinct identity and separate channel of promotion.

7. To appreciate the respective contentions of the parties we have carefully gone through the entire materials on record and the only conclusion we draw therefrom is that the respondents have taken different and contradictory stands only to forestall the claim of the appellant and Shri Kaushal, who has filed affidavits on their behalf, has made patently incorrect and untrue statements therein.

8. From a cursory glance of the letter dated 23-7-1993 written by Shri Kaushal (reproduced earlier) it is apparent that the only ground that was canvassed by the respondents to cancel the candidature of the appellant was that he was working in SBCO as LDC. In the affidavit that Shri Kaushal filed in this Court on 9-12-1995, while opposing the special leave petition of the appellant he reiterated :

"He (the appellant) wrongly mentioned in his application (obviously referring to his application seeking permission to appear in the examination) that he was Postal Assistant and inadvertently he was allowed to sit in the examination. When it was realised that the permission given to him was contrary to the rules it was rightly cancelled and naturally he was not entitled to any consequential benefits."

9. That the above stand of the respondents, as put forward through the affidavit of Shri Kaushal, is unfounded will be apparent, first from the letter dated 23-7-1993 itself wherein, while indicating that a copy of the letter was being forwarded to the appellant his designation was shown as "PA (SBCO) Agra HPO" - and not LDC - and secondly, from the following statement made by Shri Kaushal in paragraph 3 of his affidavit filed in this Court on 29-3-1996 :

"It is submitted that the petitioner Shri Jahar Singh is a Postal Assistant in Savings Bank Control Organisation"

10. Since the post the appellant was holding was made the sole basis for cancelling his candidature - as the letter dated 23-7-1993 clearly demonstrates - the above discussion of ours would have been sufficient to allow this appeal but as later on the respondents took the organisational ineligibility of the appellant to appear in the examination as a further ground for such cancellation we may advert to the same. In canvassing this ground it has been stated by Shri Kaushal in the affidavit filed on 9-12-1995 as under :

"It is further submitted that according to Rule 273 of the postal Manual Vol. IV Postal Assistants and Sorting Assistants, Railway Mail Service are eligible for

appearing in the examination of Post Office and Railway Mail Service Accountants. The petitioner belongs to Savings Bank Control Organisation Unit of Post Office and thus he was not entitled to appear in the said examination held in May 1992. The petitioner (the appellant) was inadvertently permitted because on his application form he had written his designation as Postal Assistant, SBCO."

11. Apart from the above Rule, reliance has also been placed on a circular dated 26-7-1991 issued by the Assistant Director General, Government of India, Ministry of Communications, Department of Posts, which refers to the proposed reorganisation of the SBCO with effect from 1-8-1991, and particular emphasis is laid on para (viii) thereof which reads that "consequent upon reorganisation, the distinct identity of the SBCO will be maintained and Postal Assistants (SBCO) will not be interchangeable with the Postal Assistants of the Post Office".

12. The above additional ground of the respondents so far it seeks to justify the cancellation of the candidature of the appellant as an Accountant even after he was given permission to appear in the examination in which he came successful is also without any substance. The averment in the above-quoted paragraph that the permission was 'inadvertently' granted because the appellant had written in his application form that his designation was PA, SBCO is patently incorrect for on the showing of the respondents (as discussed earlier) the appellant was holding that post. Besides, in spite of the above Rules and circular, two PAs of SBCO, Auraiya Office, namely, Satya Prakash and H.C. Ram were permitted to appear in the PO and RMS examination held in the year 1993 for appointment of Accountants as will be evident from the supplementary affidavit filed by the appellant on 23-2-1996. It is pertinent to mention here that in the affidavit that Shri Kaushal filed later on 29-3-1996, he did not dispute the above assertion of the appellant, nor give any explanation as to why such permission was granted to them in spite of the above Rules and circular.

13. For the foregoing discussion we quash the impugned order dated 23-7-1993 and direct the respondents to grant all the benefits which the appellant would be entitled to consequent upon his having been declared successful in the examination held on 22-5-1992 for the post of Accountant in PO and RMS. This direction should be complied with by 31-10-1996. The appeal is thus allowed with costs, quantified at Rs 5000.